

Finding Hazards in the Home

Identify Hazards

- **Check for electrical hazards**
 - Replace frayed or cracked extension and appliance cords and loose prongs and plugs.
 - Make sure there is only one plug per outlet. Avoid using cube-taps or overloading outlets. If you must use an extension cord, use one cord that's rated for the electrical load and that's no longer than needed.
 - Remove electrical cords that run under rugs or over nails, heaters, or pipes.
 - Cover exposed outlets and wiring.
 - Repair or replace appliances that overheat, short out, smoke, or spark.
- **Check for chemical hazards**
 - Store flammable liquids such as gasoline, acetone, benzene, and lacquer thinner in approved safety cans away from the home. Place containers in a well-ventilated area and close the lids tightly. Secure the containers to prevent spills.
 - If flammable materials must be stored in the home, use a storage can.
 - Move materials away from heat sources, open flames, gas appliances, and children.
 - Keep combustible liquids such as paint thinner, kerosene, charcoal lighter fluid, and turpentine away from heat sources.
 - Store oily waste and polishing rags in covered metal cans.
 - Instruct family members not to use gasoline, benzene, or other flammable fluids for starting fires or cleaning indoors.

- **Check for fire hazards**

- Clear out old rags, papers, mattresses, broken furniture, and other combustible materials.
- Move clothes, curtains, rags, and paper goods away from electrical equipment, gas appliances, and flammable materials.
- Remove dried grass cuttings, tree trimmings, and weeds from the property.
- Clean and repair chimneys, flue pipes, vent connectors, and gas vents.
- Keep heaters and candles away from curtains and furniture.
- Place portable heaters on a level surface, away from high-traffic areas. (Purchase portable heaters equipped with automatic shut-off switches and avoid the use of extension cords.)

- **Check safety equipment**

- Check fire safety equipment.
- Install at least one smoke detector on each level of the home, especially near the bedrooms. Test every month and change batteries at least once a year.
- Keep at least one fire extinguisher (A-B-C type). Maintain and recharge according to manufacturer's instructions. Show all family members where it's kept and how to use it.

- **Secure items**

- Check items that can shift or fall.
- Anchor water heater, large appliances, bookcases, other tall or heavy furniture, shelves, mirrors, and pictures to wall studs.
- Fit water heater with a flexible gas supply line.
- Place large or heavy objects on lower shelves.
- Install clips, latches, or other locking devices on cabinet doors.
- Provide strong support and flexible connections on gas appliances.
- Brace overhead light fixtures.
- Hang heavy items such as pictures and mirrors away from beds and places where people sit.
- Repair any deep cracks in ceilings or foundations.

- **Check utilities**

- Locate the main electric fuse or circuit breaker box, water service shutoff, and natural gas main shutoff.
- Contact local utility companies for instructions on how to turn the utilities off. Teach family members when and how to turn utilities off.
- Clear area around shutoff switches for easy access.
- Attach shutoff wrench or specialty tool to a pipe or other location close to the gas and water shutoff valves.
- Paint shutoff valves with white or fluorescent paint to increase visibility.

Adapted from resource material developed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency